
The Impact of Collateral Damage on the Taliban Insurgency

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Editorial Abstract: *LT Hussain describes the relationship between death of innocent civilians and the Afghan tribal concept of badal (revenge). He analyzes the compromise of popular support caused by collateral damage stemming from Coalition's tactics. He concludes by offering non-kinetic solutions to curbing the Taliban insurgency.*

Seven years after embarking on Operation Enduring Freedom, NATO forces continue to fight a resilient insurgency. With Al Qaeda leadership as elusive as ever, the Taliban have become the main adversary in Afghanistan. Despite the kinetic tactics and state-of-the-art technology at the Allies' disposal, the insurgency seems to show no signs of weakening. On the contrary, terrorist attacks are up 53 percent in Afghanistan, according to statistics compiled by the National Counterterrorism Center. Given these startling figures, the national level is expressing growing criticism with regards to failures in what began as the primary front on terrorism. As the Taliban insurgency continues to gain strength, the overwhelming US response has been articulated through the need to deploy more troops. The Coalition has devoted little emphasis to the underlying causes that may be fueling the Taliban insurgency; cultural elements of the Afghan people have been disregarded as they pertain to curbing the anti-US sentiment and Taliban recruitment. Furthermore, ongoing collateral damage caused by the allies hinders the campaign of winning hearts and minds.

In order to discover the negative effects of the current military strategy we will study the Taliban propaganda campaign, to outline the anti-US sentiment as it stems from innocent civilian deaths caused by Coalition strikes. Additionally, propaganda reveals that Pashtun culture (Pashtunwali) and jihad (Holy War) have played a vital role in compromising the popular support, and reactions to collateral damage. Violations of tribal customs and religion have led to shaping the Coalition forces' image as occupiers, no different from the invaders who marched into Afghanistan before. Moreover, Taliban tactics have evolved to create further cultural and religious violations

by the Coalition, pulling the friendly forces into creating additional collateral damage—and dilemma in the very tasks the Coalition set out to accomplish. In lieu of the growing insurgency and the ongoing civilian deaths, there may be grave implications for the future of United States national security and interests in South Asia. If the current military strategy in Afghanistan doesn't change, the center-of-gravity (people) may favor the Taliban, in turn prolonging the conflict and depleting the American influence and economy through a war of attrition.

While the low number of US casualties may appear to be an indicator of success given the scope of operations and years in the country, the rising pattern of casualties represents possible challenges from the insurgency. Despite dedicating costly resources and seven years of military presence in the country, the insurgency seems to show no end. As of November 2006, the cost of Afghanistan conflict was estimated to be US \$88 billion, not including the aid given to neighboring Pakistan for their assistance in the War on Terror.

Concept Of Badal

In any society, the cause of collateral damage to human life carries the potential of creating resistance movements, by invoking morality. However in a society like Pashtuns, the effect is three-fold. Not only is morality invoked through mere human emotion, but also through the tribal custom of *nang* (honor), as well as jihad. These three factors combined not only motivate and create a jihadi force unlike any other, but also render the Coalition's efforts useless in the face of very people it is trying to protect. To best explain this loss of hearts and minds, we must study Pashtun tribal code, more specifically the concept of *badal*. The word means

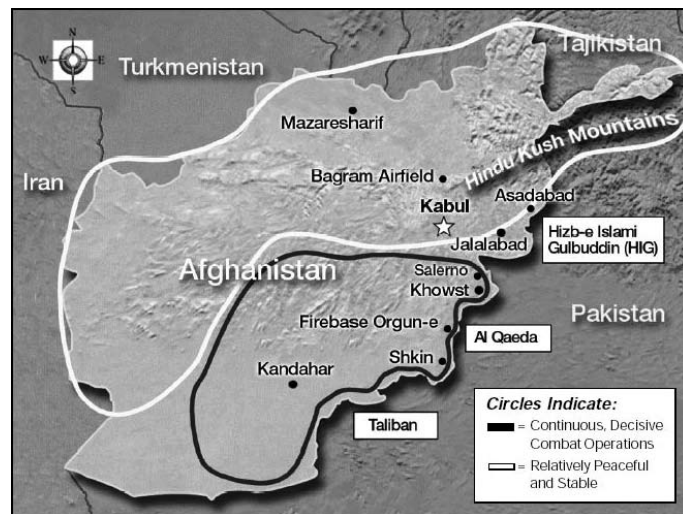
“revenge-killing” or “vendetta.” It is a highly-held tribal custom in Pashtunwali. *Badal* is an action taken to avenge death, or when the honor of a woman has been involved. The right to avenge by death is the prerogative of the individual immediately concerned, but that right also resides in the family, section, clan, or tribe. Further, *badal* need not be restricted to action against the culprit, but can be taken against any member of his kinship group. Pashtunwali is unique to the Pashtu-speaking tribes in Afghanistan who comprise of over 42 percent of the population; a separate percentage lives in the adjacent Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan. Moreover, Taliban are Pashtu-speaking thus adhering to these tribal customs, in addition to the religious guidance of Islam. Generally speaking, offending the honor code of any majority—and especially the group which happens to be the opposing force *and* part of the most dominant tribe—becomes a significant issue.

Pashtuns belong to a contact society, where extended relationships and tribal interactions take precedence over the individual. As such, the honor of one affects the honor of the collective unit of family and tribe. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the individual to restore his family or tribal honor if insult should occur. Among many factors in Pashtunwali, loss of life is at the hierarchy of *nang* violations, thus demanding vendetta or some type of reconciliation—even if the loss of life is accidental. Reconciliations are done through a Jirga (group of elders) who come to a mutual agreement, be it monetary or some other arrangement that satisfies the victim's family. In view of this very concept, it is apparent that Pashtuns are a society unlike any in the Western world, and that closure is a very important concept which cannot

be overlooked by the offender. Even as a Muslim society, *nang* seems to take priority over the Islamic elements of mercy and forgiveness, often creating a contradiction between the two value systems.

Collateral Damage

Coalition tactics have become counterproductive in the face of culture and insurgency. Overall, Allied military tactics have depended primarily on technology to oppose the enemy. As such, they often employ aerial assets following a contact or skirmish with the Taliban forces. A host of Close Air Support (CAS) fighters and bombers have been utilized in reaction to intelligence reports and ground support. Aircraft have even been used interchangeably, despite their intended roles. For instance, according to a November 2007 *Navy Times* report, B-1B [Lancer] bombers flew forty-one CAS missions in a single day, following the discovery of mechanical failures in the F-15 [Eagle]. While the US hailed this as a success story, in terms of adaptability and reinforcement for the ground forces, the broader strategy alludes to a continued reliance on aerial bombing. These weapons systems provide roles traditionally accomplished with lighter payloads, and closer proximity to the targets. To qualify the previous statement, the US Air Force is bolstering this immediate strike capability, combining the payload, long-loiter, and high-altitude capacity of bombers with precision munitions. This, along with improved command and control, and precise targeting, allows bombers to conduct CAS. However, the precision capabilities of high-altitude munitions are negligible in the face of faulty intelligence and poor decision-making on the ground. Even as Coalition forces were apologizing and handing out blood-money of US \$2000 per family for a recent (March 2007) ground-related episode of collateral damage, an air strike killed at least 21 civilians in the southern province of Helmand that same day. Unfortunately, even one death of a civilian is one too many, given the cultural aspects of the affected tribes.



Current Afghan areas of conflict. (Author)

Taliban Strategy

Knowing the Coalition's technological might and superiority, Taliban maintain their unconventional tactics, luring friendly forces into situations that promote collateral damage, and reduce their ability to protect the civilian population. The insurgents have largely sought to avoid full-on battlefield confrontations and instead relied on guerrilla-style tactics, including suicide attacks, roadside bombings and kidnapping. Such techniques may also be driven by the Coalition's predictability of using air strikes, and lack of cultural familiarity. This is not to say the Taliban are free from collateral damage. As of June 2007, the death toll for the period of 2006 and 2007 amounted to 6,000 people with over 1,500 civilian casualties, the bulk of which were attributed to suicide bombings and other insurgent activities. Nonetheless, friendly forces are held to the standards of international law and rules of engagement, while Taliban are known to carry out human rights violations. Additionally, the Taliban's goal may not be to win hearts and minds for their own cause, but to ensure friendly forces are unable to gain the trust of the Afghan people. In this regard, knowing the nature and wrath of the aerial strikes, Taliban may intentionally be taking the fight into inhabited villages and residential dwellings. Running into a village after an encounter with the Coalition forces has become routine

activity for many Taliban fighters, knowing that an aerial attack will most likely follow the incident. Sacrificing fighters may be a price worth paying for their political aspirations, compared to the damage inflicted on the friendly forces' image. According to Nader Naderi, Vice President of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, "the casualties are an easy propaganda tool for the Taliban to use in the affected areas. People feel under attack by both sides. This does not win hearts and minds."

Perception

Operation Enduring Freedom began with the aims of freeing the oppressed Afghan people from a ruthless Taliban regime, and to promote stability in order to disrupt the safe havens of Al Qaeda. In doing so, American policy makers promised safety, security, and an improved quality-of-life for the people. Seven years later, the situation is anything but ideal. More so than its inability to protect the people from Taliban atrocities, innocent deaths caused by the Coalition forces are beginning to turn away initial popular support. Many people no longer view Coalition forces as liberators, but as a military that makes indiscriminate decisions—in which people are acceptable losses. Compounding the issue are the meager compensations and the rare apologies to the affected families, if any. If not

reduced and mediated appropriately through tribal customs, these cultural violations can only complicate matters. As noted in the concept of *badal*, the honor of the entire family or clan is at stake. Without reconciliation from both sides, the only outlet for the insulted member(s) is to take revenge. The lack of reconciliation not only paints the Coalition as arrogant, but also feeds the perception of an occupation—where people feel victim to the oppression and injustices of the invading force.

Jihad and Madrassas

Having perceived the Coalition's presence as an environment of oppression and injustice, the concept of jihad begins to surface in combination with *badal*, further aggravating public resentment. According to Islam, oppression and injustice are sufficient criteria to justify a Holy War against an invading non-Muslim force. Unfortunately, extremists advocate jihad at a lesser level than that declared by the state itself (Dar-ul-Harb). This is a consequence of the fact that Afghans view President Hamid Karzai as an extension of the West, similar to the historical events surrounding Shah Shuja and the first Anglo-Afghan war. The following Quranic verses highlight the basic criteria pertaining to armed struggle:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits and slay them wherever ye catch them. And turn them out from where they have turned you out; for persecution is worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the sacred Mosque unless they first fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who reject faith. But if they cease, Allah is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more persecution. And the religion becomes Allah's. But if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

According to these verses, there are elements of forgiveness and rules of engagement for termination of an armed struggle. Whereas perception is reality, termination is dependent upon creation

of an environment where the people no longer feel oppressed. Until such circumstances exist, the struggle remains a mandatory act upon all Muslims, hence attracting support from outside Afghanistan, be it in terms of financing or personnel who may wish to fulfill their religious obligation.

After the context of jihad is established, madrassas [Islamic schools] often carry out the duties of rallying the youth for the religious cause. In the case of Afghanistan, the recruitment pool is abundant because of its proximity to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. Due to influx of refugees from the 1980s Soviet invasion and the present conflict, thousands have settled in the FATA despite its broken socio-economic conditions. Because of the poor quality-of-life, madrassas have become the primary mode of education



Figure 1. Coalition leaflet.
(Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan)

system. The type of education offered in most of these schools centers on religion alone. Upon graduation from these centers, students become ripe for recruitment by the Taliban. When probing deeper into this phenomena, the problem is large enough to sustain an insurgency for years to come. Haqqani madrassa (in Pakistan's NWFP) alone produces over 3,000 graduates each year, whose sole purpose—absent of other opportunities—will be to fight jihad. Regrettably this issue is not limited to the FATA alone. According to a 2002 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) report, there were an approximate 28,000 madrassas in Pakistan with only 8000 of them registered. By March 2002, there were around 600,000 students in 6000 registered madrassas. Compared to 4000 Taliban killed in 2006, even one percent of the student population is ample to sustain the resistance in Afghanistan.

Information Warfare

In an effort to restore the Coalition's tarnished image, they must considerably reduce collateral damage, while instituting an effective propaganda campaign to win back the hearts and minds of the people. The current propaganda campaign lacks the depth required to change the resentment and perception of the people; it is not deeply rooted in concepts of Pashtun culture and Islam. Leaflets currently distributed throughout the region are often too simplistic, and lack the moral fiber in comparison to the Taliban's propaganda campaigns (Figure 1).

In the portrayed leaflet, the common theme is that of friendship between the Coalition forces and the people. However, with continued collateral damage, such themes may appear as a contradiction in the Coalition's efforts. Secondly, the honor and privacy of women (*zan*) are deeply-held values for the Pashtuns, concepts ignored by the current leaflets. To show Pashtun women's faces, coupled with a comparison to the unveiled Western women, is a degradation of *nang*. It is critical that future campaigns consider the culture and values of the intended targets.

While the portrayed leaflet offers gestures of friendship, there are numerous others that place their emphasis on monetary issues and wrath of the Coalition military. They either offer rewards (pictures of US dollars) for the capture of targeted individuals or show images such as an AC-130 [Spectre] gunship approaching to eliminate human targets. In view of the collateral damage caused by the aerial strikes, it may be worthwhile to omit images which many may view as the vehicles of indiscriminate death. As seen throughout the Soviet occupation, advanced technology did not deter the resistance, instead the locals perceived it as the tools of ruthless, brutal tactics.

Whereas Coalition propaganda falls short on its emphasis on cultural and religious elements, Taliban propaganda more than makes up for its reliance on local values. Taliban leaflets, known

as “Night Letters,” (Figure 2) reveal the power and effectiveness gained from Pashtunwali, Islam, and collateral damage caused by the Coalition, as noted in the following translations:

“Pious Afghans, Brave and Courageous People! Accept our greetings; Dear Muslim and devout brother! As you all know some countries in the Islamic world and specifically our dear country-Afghanistan-are spending day and night under the grip of the crusaders in the last few years. During this time the cruel crusaders’ army and their domestic servants have committed grave atrocities, barbarity and savagery against our innocent brothers and sisters. Their cruelties have not ceased. You have watched and heard of their ongoing savagery in Afghanistan and Iraq, the two best examples that have been exposed by the international media...”

Message to the “Mujahed” (freedom fighter) Afghan Nation! You have served Islam a great deal throughout history and have defeated the non-Muslims of the world. Your ancestors such as Ahmad Shah Abdaali, Mahmood Ghaznawi, Shahaabuddin Ghorri and other heroes have recorded a great history in fight against non-Muslims, but it is a pity that today some of America-trained servants under the name of bright-minded have destroyed the honored history of Afghanistan. Today once again your sons, clerics and Taliban and the faithful people, in these circumstances are fighting against non-Muslims and are serving Islam. If you don’t do any thing else, at least support your Mujahed sons and do not be impressed by the false propaganda of non-Muslim enemies. God forbid one and half millions of martyrs of jihad (religious Islamic fight) against Russians and one hundred thousand of martyrs of Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan (martyr Taliban) will ask you for the cost of their martyrdom, so we hope that you meet our expectations. They’re stopping the Islamic education and instead are teaching Christianity to your children. Taliban never want to kill common civilians, but unfortunately some so-called Afghans have become the supporters of our enemies. Non-

Muslims want to kill and pit Afghan against Afghan and in the name of Talib they are attacking everybody and they are killing Afghans and destroying your houses and they are destroying Islamic madrassas in Afghanistan. They burn their Afghan arms and ammunitions. They want to make Afghanistan as helpless as Palestine. You have seen that in all “Madrassas” (Islamic schools) nowadays they teach Christianity to your children. Once again, we request you not to support non-Muslims, otherwise you will have the whole responsibility here and hereafter.

Notably, Taliban information campaigns revolve around perceptions and sentiments of those affected by Coalition actions. Not only are the Taliban campaigns more thorough, they also incorporate aspects of honor, history, and tradition to summon the support of the people. With the Soviet invasion not far from the memories of the Afghan people, they compare the atrocities of this conflict to the indiscriminate actions of the previous war, drawing parallels to undermine Coalition’s efforts.

Nonetheless, it is the Coalition who finds itself in a defensive stance, not only to counter the Taliban propaganda but to gain legitimacy from a populace that has begun to lose confidence in its efforts. In the end it is the people who will determine victory or defeat; Taliban seem to know this fact while the “liberators” often appear to overlook the power of such information.

Modeling the Trends

In the full research project which formed the basis of this article, the author used a computer simulation model, STELLA®, to forecast general Taliban insurgency trends for the next 72 months. This model takes key factual data and couples it with speculations. Further, it links collateral damage to the Taliban’s ability to affect public opinion and recruit fighters via madrassa population. The model only takes into account factors pertaining to civilian deaths, Taliban propaganda, recruitment, and Coalition’s kill rate. The following facts were used to formulate the simulation.

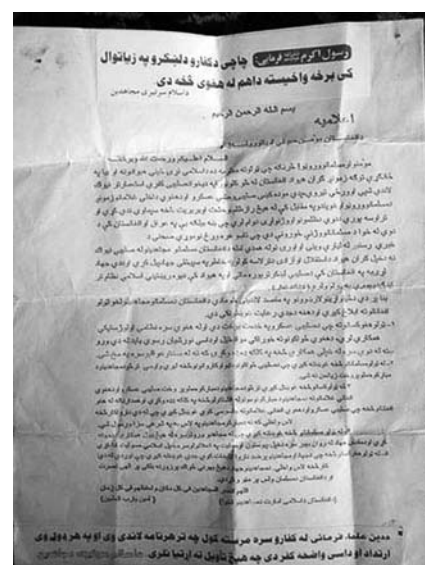


Figure 2. Taliban “Night Letter” propaganda leaflet. (CFC-Afghanistan)

- Coalition Kill Rate of 333 per month, based on 4,000 Taliban killed in 2006.
- Civilian Death Rate of 52 per month, based on 314 civilian killed in the first six months of 2007.
- Madrassa Population of 600,000 based on the 6,000 of 8,000 registered madrassas in Pakistan; additional 22,000 madrassas’ population remains unaccounted.
- Graduation Rate of 1 percent of 600,000 per year. Recruitment Rate of less than 6000 Students per year due to possible attrition (less than 1 percent of Madrassa Population). In 2001, Pakistan’s official figures report only one percent of madrassas sent their students for military training in Afghanistan.
- Positive Perception of Coalition Behavior determined to be an important factor in countering Taliban Propaganda Effectiveness. According to a BBC countrywide poll, the number of Afghans who believe that their country is headed in the right direction dropped a precipitous 22 percentage points between 2005 and 2006, from 77 percent to 55 percent, while the number of Afghans who approve of the US presence in their country eroded from 68 percent to 57 percent. Meanwhile, Afghan President Karzai has repeatedly urged NATO and the US military to act with greater restraint.

Findings

The STELLA® simulation, exclusive of other contributing factors, produced startling results as to the duration of the insurgency. Based on the current Coalition's Kill Rate and Taliban Recruitment Rate (stemming from the madrassas), the numbers favored the insurgency. Despite assuming the concept of revenge is more relevant for Pakistan than for the "outside forces" (Coalition) in Afghanistan, and assuming Taliban fighters to be at a low stock of 5,000, the stock was not reduced to half until a period of six years; 23,654 Taliban were killed in 72 months.

The model also revealed another dilemma: while the Coalition needs tactical restraint to reduce collateral damage, it may also reduce the kill rate needed to reduce the number of fighters. In view of this, the only way to improve the Coalition's perception while curbing the insurgency is to interfere with Taliban recruitment. However, interfering with the recruitment pool requires non-kinetic solutions. There are no military solutions for reducing an enormous madrassa population in the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan. To accomplish the task of curbing the Taliban insurgency, solutions must appear in the broader Coalition policies and strategies towards Afghanistan.

Applications

The implications of these findings cannot be understated. With a renewed Coalition emphasis on reducing collateral damage, restraint and improved decision-making at the operational level are instrumental to offsetting the factors which promote and sustain recruitment. Without drastic improvements at the tactical level, the Coalition's kinetic methods will continue to produce innocent civilian casualties, thus playing into the hands of Taliban. Notably, improvements at the tactical level must not be limited to technology alone; they must extend down to the actual trigger-pullers. Whereas culture and language are the overlooked factors in understanding the enemy, we need better educated fighting men and women, as

well as those in the upper echelons of tactical decision making. It should be no surprise that Taliban guerilla tactics lure the Coalition forces into creating collateral damage, however, tactical level enhancements can provide increased situational awareness to soldiers and commanders as to possible consequences of a strike on a fleeing or hidden Taliban target. This added piece in the decision making process can provide dividends to the overall counterinsurgency strategy, especially since the military continues to desire the full effect of kinetic weapons to destroy the enemy—while limiting the likelihood of collateral damage.

With regard to Information Operations campaigns, the efforts must incorporate culture, religion, and concerns of the locals. The amount of information, when compared to Taliban leaflets, pales in comparison to a typical Coalition leaflet. Additionally, the Coalition must take into account the unintended consequences stemming from overlooked details such as Pashtu language or tribal dominance in Afghanistan. Not only do such matters highlight the need for cultural experts—in the greater CENTCOM Area of Responsibility or in country—but also the need to revamp current Coalition IO efforts to counter and compete with Taliban influence campaigns.

Non-Kinetic Approach To Afghanistan

While the previous focus was on collateral damage stemming from the military campaigns in Afghanistan, this section delineates an indirect approach to insurgency. More specifically, it addresses the turbulent Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan as catalysts to stabilizing Afghanistan. Since FATA serves as a critical component for the Taliban recruitment, it may be the center-of-gravity for stability in the entire region. Also, it is important to note that possible solutions or policies must coincide with a drastic reduction in collateral damage on both sides of the border. Without a reduction in collateral damage, any attempts to stabilize FATA may only result in costly failures and additional loss of life. In order to forge possible solutions for FATA, we must

explore its broken socio-economic and political systems. Fundamental problems plague the inhabitants and have lead to its current role as a haven for many extremists.

Poor Quality-of-Life

The 10,510 square mile FATA is home to over six million, along with significant number of refugees who have settled there since the onset of Soviet invasion in 1979. When probing deeper into FATA dynamics, one can conclude that extremism offers the only attractive outlet for many youth, who otherwise could not be gainfully employed elsewhere. Due to a large youth population and a broken education system, madrassas have become the only institutions of education, taking in children from ages five to their teens. From many parents' points of view, madrassas offer a valuable service, since students are able to learn while receiving three meals a day, eliminating the parents' burden in a region where poverty is abundant and job opportunities scarce. Unfortunately, since the 1980's most madrassas have taught a religious curriculum with no emphasis on modern, more applicable education. Attempts to modernize madrassa education and to incorporate females into the student populace has been challenging, often resulting in rocketing or bombing of a particular school. Graduating with a strict emphasis on Islam, the students are mentally prepared to take up arms, making them susceptible to Taliban exploitation. The *Child Soldiers Global Report 2001* notes around 20,000 children below eighteen were recruited by madrassas in Pakistan to fight in Afghanistan. The report quoted Pakistan's official figures as saying only one percent of madrassas sent their students for military training in Afghanistan. This figure may have risen in the wake of growing insurgency in Afghanistan but even 20,000 is significant number—more than sufficient to sustain Taliban recruitment efforts.

Neglected infrastructure within the FATA is also a reflection of Pakistan's broader domestic politics and policies. The area is stricken with lack of basic social services, resembling more an

Afghan region than a territory of Pakistan. Adequate health and security systems do not exist to maintain any quality-of-life. Naturally, the inhabitants find themselves sympathizing with their tribes and families further west, rather than their country of residence. Lack of security also makes fertile grounds for the influence of local and foreign militants. Government officials who have spent time in the tribal areas say there may be as many as 1,000 foreign militants there, but because many have intermarried and raised families, their status as foreigners is somewhat blurred. Such reasons lead many to believe Al Qaeda leadership may have blended into lawless regions of the FATA. The Federally Administered Tribal Area has 7,000 'Khasadar' (local police) for about four million people. These forces are considered inadequate, although the North West Frontier Province can also call on the services of the 17,000 members of the Frontier Constabulary. *[Editor's Note: for further insight, see Policing Pakistan's Northwest Frontier, Mr. Fasihuddin Interview, IO Sphere, Spring 2008.]* For Pakistani forces to gain any positive influence and credibility, the government must provide basic human services must in order to give locals an incentive to oust the radical elements from their society. For now, the FATA is plagued with the kinds of issues practically unheard of from the perspective of a citizen in the West. As of December 2006, 135 out of every 1,000 children under the age of five died early, often due to chest infections, diarrhea, or other treatable ailments. For every 1,000 child births, six mothers die, often because quality medical assistance was unavailable. Clearly, there is much room for progress in winning the support from a region that gave birth to the Taliban—and may be continuing to support its endeavors.

Insurgency and terrorism are not the only outlets in FATA. In the absence of viable options to earn a living, the lure of illicit activities such as smuggling and drug trafficking is as difficult to resist as

the call of extremist Islamist elements. Such occupations are driven out of necessity as well as consumer demand. Unemployment, in combination with lack of security and education, make a dangerous recipe for illegal activities. Further, despite having repatriated over 2.5 million refugees, over one million still remain in the area. Until the basic day-to-day issues are addressed, all Coalition efforts towards the War on Terror may be rendered useless. Without restoring stability and basic human necessities, it remains difficult at best to win hearts and minds.

Drugs

The border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan serve as critical routes for drug smugglers. The drug mafia network enjoys a multi-billion dollar



A Jirga council confronts tribal issues. (US Army)

industry, which disrupts the state's ability to control and enforce laws in an already unstable area. Such instability works in the favor of the drug smugglers by providing outlets for labs and clients. Analysts estimate over half of Afghanistan's opium is smuggled through Pakistan. And while we cannot call the entire country of Pakistan a "narco state," the FATA and adjacent North West Frontier Province (NWFP) can be labeled as such, given how breakdown of law and order provides critical value for the drug network. With drugs making an already bad area non-conducive to Coalition's efforts to root out radical forces, the War on Terror must have another and equal front: a War on Drugs. In 2004 alone, there were an

estimated 3.5 to 5 million drug users in Pakistan, in many ways creating the kind of demand that attracts suppliers to areas west of the border. Drugs not only hinder Pakistani efforts to reform the area, but offer motives to "keep the chaos alive" for survival of illegal industry. This indirectly contributes to the extremists, who may discover new alliances with the drug smugglers by virtue of a common enemy. Unlike Afghanistan, Pakistan has a capable government and the revenue to offer viable options in place of the drug business; it's a matter of acknowledging the severity of the problem and then addressing it with feasible options.

Current Approach

In an effort to enforce its domestic policies, assist the Coalition forces, and reform the FATA system of governance, Pakistan has deployed over 100,000 troops to the areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The task has proven difficult, since the military has met armed attacks from the local tribes. The bulk of the resistance has materialized in the Waziristan area (the most volatile regions in the FATA). Fierce clashes coupled with suicide attacks killed 250 people in the month of July 2007 alone. As of December 2006, the Pakistani military had lost over 750 troops while trying to hunt for terrorists. This raises

the question: has this strategy produced any results in the quest to revive the Maliks [traditional leader, literally "king"], or will a different method yield a better outcome? Many feel that the current approach has further radicalized the area, resulting in a scenario where the military is in constant confrontation with the clerics, while the traditional leaders and civil servants have become even weaker.

The costly ordeal, bloodier than the loss of American troops in Afghanistan, suggests the present Pakistani policy will continue to encounter resistance from the locals. Even the 100,000 troops in FATA have appeared inferior in the locals' eyes. According to *Pajhwok Afghan News* (3 September 2007), the

ambush of a Pakistani military convoy in Waziristan resulted in the capture of over 300 security personnel, making it one of the most embarrassing incidents thus far. This not only highlights the difficulty of conducting operations in the FATA, but shows the resilience of extremists—who have managed to capture the assets and weaponry of a formal army unit.

Death of the Innocent

We can also attribute the broader implications of the struggle in FATA to collateral damage. In an already alienated region, innocent civilian deaths have invoked jihad *even against a Muslim state*. The implications of citizens rising against their government may have far greater dangers, since theology has come in confrontation with secularism, thus dividing the Pakistani populace, while creating civil unrest in a country that enjoyed a fair amount of domestic peace prior to 9/11. Given this tension between the religious and secular forces, two radical ideals come into view. First is the religious groups' quest to overtake and run the state, as was the case with Khomeini's Islamic revolution in Iran. Second, Syed Qutb's [Egyptian author, considered an Islamic extremist] philosophies surface amidst the struggle in Pakistan, in that use of force and jihad are sanctioned against one's own Muslim state. Combined, the two create a recipe for disaster for Pakistan's long term stability. In view of these implications, kinetic means must halt in order to diffuse the two radical ideologies. The following excerpts from a 2004 propaganda video filmed in Waziristan, lend credibility to issues pertaining to collateral damage and jihad:

Parvez's army, instead of removing their burnt vehicles and collecting the dead, brought more artillery. They used thousands of rounds against true Muslims and made thousands of innocent children cry, and made many holes in the beautiful mud houses. This ignited the Muslims of the area who rushed to the streets and attacked all military convoys who were entering the area, as a result of

which 8 big vehicles were burnt and tens of soldiers killed; others fled.

Finally Parvez's army warned people of the area to abandon their houses or else be bombed. When these Muslims were taken out of their houses, they bombed all these convoys of departing people.

Hey military soldiers, how did your dignity allow you to bomb Muslim houses? Who do you believe in? Almighty Allah, Bush, Blair, or Parvez? These are traitors who eliminated your history. You were those who people used to salute but now they fight you. Why? Think a little about what you are doing. Muslims of the world were proud of your power. People expected that you would free the Holy Land Jerusalem. They expected you



would protect the Holy Land (Mecca & Medina). You obtained atomic power to protect Muslims but now you kill Muslims in order to protect atomic bombs. You make a reverse history. What would historians write about you? As Islamic military or Crusader military?

O Believers, do not make friendships with Jews and Christians. Amongst you some make friends with them and they will be counted as one of them. O killers of Muslims, come and repent for your actions. Allah is forgiving; otherwise He will destroy you, or you will be killed at the hands of Muslims and Almighty will send you to hell, a very bad place.

Dilemma of the Pakistani Army

By all practical purposes, the Pakistani Army is in confrontation with religious extremists who view themselves as fighting jihad against the near enemy. Coupled with *badal* and Holy War, the resulting domestic instability creates unique challenges for the army and its role in a counterinsurgency. The Pakistani Army was not designed to fight internal insurgencies, but rather focus on outside threats such as its rival India. The events of 9/11 have not only brought a Muslim military in confrontation with its own citizens, but also tested the very capabilities and training of the Pakistani Army. According to Lieutenant General Mohammed Hamid Khan, President of Pakistan's National Defense University and a former Combatant Commander for the Frontier Corps, the long term FATA policy must involve non-kinetic solutions; incidents of collateral damage and poor quality-of-life alone aggravate the anti-government sentiment there. Such acknowledgments, while giving credence to non-kinetic solutions, may also reveal rifts amongst commanders on the ground and broader government policies pertaining to the War on Terror and support of the Coalition. Continuing on the current kinetic path is likely to create further animosity towards the army and government of Pakistan.

Repercussions of Kinetic Methods

There seems to be an assumption that uniformity of kinetic strategy is needed to counter the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Further, ongoing debates within the US political arena assert that Pakistan has not dedicated sufficient resources and efforts to root out terrorism from the FATA. Thus, the West blames many failures in Afghanistan on the Pakistani military. However, when comparing the domestic issues of the two states, there is little room to employ the strategy in Afghanistan to the rugged areas of FATA. Additionally, we must compare

the resulting instability, since kinetic means are likely to produce two different sets of consequences. From the Afghan perspective, outside forces (US and NATO) are engaged with an enemy that played a role in the events leading up to 9/11. From the Pakistani perspective, the government has revamped policies that once used the very populace it now must now face. The repercussions also differ due the immediacy of the problem. When *badal* and collateral damage are the underlying issues, the concept of revenge is more relevant for Pakistan than for Coalition “outside forces” in Afghanistan. Though an angry generation may be left in the wake of a future withdrawal from Afghanistan, should the conflict subside, US and NATO forces will enjoy the safety afforded by physical/geographic separation. On the other hand, Pakistan will be left to police an angry populace, which it must govern for the sake of domestic harmony. With suicide bombings on the rise and Pashtun nationalism more vocal than ever, the Pakistani military must carve its own strategy—one that balances military objectives as well as their aftermath. Pressuring the Pakistani regime to employ tactics used by the US and NATO forces may jeopardize the legitimacy of this newly elected government.

The Way Forward

In light of the broken socio-economic systems, alienation of the Pashtuns, and extremism, Pakistan can no longer afford to keep FATA separated from mainstream politics and the national economy. Be it drug mafias or terrorists, their government has lost too much control due to history of the region and the trends in criminality. A separate system of governance is no longer feasible for FATA, as the Malik system too will keep the region alienated, just as it had before the rise of Mullahs. Two extreme forms of government are not conducive to the functions of any state. The FATA Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) may have been useful under the British, where a master-subject relationship existed, but the same cannot be true for a state trying to reform its populace and bring it into the mainstream society. The mere nature

of FCR stems from mass punishment of an entire tribe, possibly leading to further aggravation if enforced by the Pakistani government. Maintaining this outdated system of governance will only keep the classic ethnic stereotypes alive, specifically the Punjabi-Pashtun tensions that have lasted since the British and Ranjit Singh’s rule over Punjab. A divided system will confirm the Punjabi domination of national politics and economy in the eyes of the Pashtuns. This same belief led to the East Pakistan revolts, the 1971 India-Pakistan War and the secession of Bangladesh (former West Pakistan).

Besides, failures to absorb the Pashtuns into mainstream society, politics, and economy may also keep the concept of a separate “Pashtunistan” (a separate state carved out of the FATA areas) alive—a prospect which the Pakistani government cannot afford to consider. Such an event would cripple the state, reducing it to half the territory it holds today.

Modern Education

Clearly many of the FATA problems stem from madrassas and heavy emphasis on religion. The lack of practical education has led to lowered prospects and opportunities for the overwhelming number of youth, in turn leading them to the luster of illegal activities. The literacy rates are also indicative of the overall social-ills of the region. Female literacy rates are especially alarming. Notably, there is a great disparity between the FATA literacy rates and the remainder of Pakistan.

In addition to instituting modern education, government must also monitor and register the madrassas, to track their curriculums and agenda. Madrassas initially offered education in remote areas where government influence, resources, or transportation were unreachable. However, since 1979 the madrassas may have far exceeded the scope of necessity. There are approximately 28,000 madrassas in Pakistan, with only 8000 of them registered. The proliferation of madrassas began in the 1980s and continued in the 1990s. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

(HRCP) 2002 report, by March 2002, there were around 600,000 students in 6000 registered madrassas with more than 250,000 students in Punjab alone. Compare this to 1979, when there were less than 2000 of these schools. They are now seen and portrayed as fundamentalist institutions, and breeding grounds for militants to wage war all over the world. From being established centers of learning in the Middle-Ages, they have traveled a long way.

Agriculture

When dealing with issues related to opium, a successful war on drugs must be accompanied by agricultural developments. For now, the drug markets and smuggling may offer lucrative incentives for many with no other source of income. With only eight percent of land cultivated and three percent irrigated, additional cropland and irrigation are necessary before addressing the issue of drug enforcement. Taking away the illicit market without providing reasonable substitutes will only aggravate those entrenched in this occupation, be it for profit or basic livelihood.

Though agricultural projects require time to institute various crops based on harvests and seasons, they are the best solutions for gradually reducing the opium market. Also, such projects will require tremendous monetary resources to erect the infrastructure needed to bring about a positive change. Some may argue that Pakistan does not have the financial resources or allocations to carry out such projects, due their reliance on US support during the War on Terrorism. However, research suggests otherwise. According to the US State Department, “Pakistan has publicly expressed its support to Afghanistan’s President Karzai and has pledged \$100 million toward Afghanistan’s reconstruction.” Despite this generous offer, the large sum of money may best be spent on the broken and turbulent regions of the FATA. As evident through the various socio-economic systems and poor quality-of-life discussions, the FATA regions should be the most immediate concern for the Pakistani regime.

Reconciliation

None of these measures can be achieved without certain levels of diplomacy and cooperation from the FATA population. As seen through the Pakistani military's experience, kinetic methods have only widened the gap between FATA and mainstream Pakistan. They have also led to domestic instability for the country, creating challenges associated with fighting an internal insurgency, a mission which the Pakistani forces were not designed to fight. To reduce future instability, the Pakistani Government must pursue reconciliation efforts. As noted previously, damage caused by the Pakistani forces must be addressed through tribal code of Pashtunwali. This may include forming alliances with moderate elders in the tribes, or payments of blood money to the families of collateral damage victims. Pakistani forces are also guilty of collateral damage. Like the Taliban organization, resistance forces in FATA are not monolithic, and may be susceptible to agreements for the broader good of the region and country. An entire society or region must not stay isolated from the remainder of the state based on the actions of radical element within them. Winning the trust of the locals may prove to be the best aid in ousting extremism from FATA.

Summary

The FATA are the pivotal factor in curbing the Taliban insurgency, not only in Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan. Over time, the neglected regions have become ripe for the intrusions of outside actors, serving as conduits for illegal activities and terrorism. The effects of alienation, and the subsequent induction of radical religion, transformed FATA into a recruitment pool for extremism. The cross-border incursions continue to disrupt the security of Afghanistan, since collateral damage from military strikes allows the Taliban propaganda to flourish among the youth and non-gainfully employed populace of the FATA.

This article identifies broken systems which can be repaired, to increase the quality-of-life and offer alternatives to the thousands of youth who may otherwise become targets of the Taliban

recruitment. By nationalizing the FATA region and offering socio-economic opportunities, the Pakistani government may win the favor of the locals. Since the military strategy has done more harm than good, mirroring the Coalition's failures to the west, the real solution may be imbedded in reconciliation with the moderate forces, plus bringing the region into modernity similar to the mainstream Pakistan. Only state authority can transform the region. Otherwise the FATA will continue to be a volatile point of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Not only do the Taliban trace their origins to FATA, they have supporters within these lawless regions; Coalition forces cannot cross into this area due to sovereignty factors.

Saving FATA will most certainly pay dividends to the security in Afghanistan. We must grant the conditions for change by dramatically reducing collateral damage, to hinder the credibility and recruitment campaigns of the Taliban on both sides of the border. By studying the culture of the Pashtuns, we find current Coalition military tactics have done more harm than good. Contrary to the Coalition's premise, technological superiority and mass didn't prove useful in the face of tribal customs.

Finally, the issue of collateral damage provides the fuel for many Taliban propaganda campaigns, worsening anti-Western sentiment. The deaths of innocent civilians have led to mistrust of the Coalition while creating a perception of oppression and injustice, key requirements for invoking *badal* and jihad. The concept of revenge, coupled with Holy War, has been the underlying theme behind the loss of hearts and minds campaign in Afghanistan. Simply put, neglect of Pashtun tribal customs has compounded the insurgency. Additionally, the people's role as the key center-of-gravity has been ignored, further damaging the Coalition's image and hindering our objectives for stabilizing and securing Afghanistan. To ensure a lasting success, the Coalition must explore the political and social aspects of winning the hearts and minds of a populace it claims to have liberated from the clutches of the Taliban.

Being the primary front in the War on Terrorism, a defeat in Afghanistan or Pakistan may not only compromise the security of South Asia but it may have deadly consequences for the broader international community—possibly encouraging the terrorists' cause and confidence. 